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NSC BRIEFING

14 June 1955

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

RECENT ASSESSMENTS OF TOP SOVIET LEADERS

1. Conduct of Soviet pilgrims in Belgrade (particularly Khrushchev) made uniformly bad impression both on Yugoslavs and on Western representatives on the scene. Yugoslavs openly contemptuous of Soviet leader following visit.

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STATE review(s) completed.

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NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐

☐ DECLASSIFIED

CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S

NEXT REVIEW DATE:

AUTH: IN 20-2

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III. In same connection, Ambassador Bohlen, following attendance at large Soviet party for Nehru, comments that the more the top Soviet leaders are seen, the less and less impressive they become.

A. Bohlen states: "In fact, with exception of Malenkov (who, even in eclipse, strikes me of superior quality to others) and Molotov (who, perhaps by experience, gives impression of greater dignity and capability), there is not one of present Presidium membership who appears to have outstanding personal qualities or abilities."

IV. Reaction in Belgrade to Soviet delegation probably result of shock caused by Khrushchev's uninhibited, headlong temperament seen in new role for first time.

- A. Contrast is sharp, when compared with reptilian reserve of Stalin, who was always shielded from close scrutiny.
- B. Bohlen's appraisal of Soviet leaders, while unflattering is less extreme than Yugoslavs', probably because of greater familiarity.
- C. Whatever Khrushchev's diplomatic ineptitude, it has not stood in way of his rise to top and it is equally doubtful that it will cause his decline.
1. His personal position is probably little affected by Belgrade performance.
 2. While individual Soviet leaders may lack polish and fail to measure up to Western standards of "greatness," nonetheless unsafe to conclude that Soviet policy is therefore in incompetent hands.

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